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SUBJECT: BELGIAN MFA ON BELGIAN AID ALONG RWANDAN BORDER
AND STATUS OF RWANDANS IN BELGIUM

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Over the course of a meeting on April 18, Paul Jansen, the Belgian MFA desk officer for Rwanda and Burundi, explained Belgium's role in helping reassimilate Rwandan returnees and the status of Rwandan immigrants in Belgium. END SUMMARY

Belgium's Role in Reassimilation

¶2. (SBU) According to MFA official Jansen, the presence of the Force Democratique de Liberation de Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu group that played a major role in perpetrating the 1994 genocide along the Rwandan/Congolese border, has remained a point of contention between the two countries. The Rwandan government has often accused the Congolese of aiding and supporting the FDLR and preventing the capture of FDLR leadership responsible for war crimes committed during the genocide. The Congolese counter that Rwanda sponsors Laurent Nkunda's army, and that Nkunda is an eccentric, Congolese Tutsi warlord who sees himself as the defender of the Tutsi population against the FDLR.

¶3. (SBU) Mr. Jansen does not believe that either country's allegations are truthful, that they are just saber rattling. He said that both countries have an economic stake in keeping the border calm. Rwanda, a country with few natural resources, relies on imports and trade that travel across the eastern provinces of Congo. On the other hand, the vast mineral resources of eastern Congo have been under used because of violence in the region, which has caused economic hardship.

¶4. (SBU) The genocide and border conflicts have resulted in many Rwandans leaving their homes either as refugees or as FDLR conscripts. The Rwandan government is working to make sure that when these refugees and former soldiers return they are given the skills and support they need to reestablish themselves. According to Jansen, Belgium is playing a role in establishing "re-welcome centers" along the Congolese border. These centers, operated by the Rwandan government, provide basic life skills, job training, and cultural education to returnees. The training is particularly useful to the many who left Rwanda at a young age and remain largely undereducated. Jansen said that Belgium has provided technical assistance to the centers and helps with limited logistical matters. The Belgium government views the centers as an important element in rebuilding the human capital lost during the genocide.

Rwandan Refugees in Belgium

¶5. (SBU) There are thought to be over 30,000 Rwandans or

former Rwandans currently living in Belgium. Jansen reported that the expatriate community is divided, not so much along ethnic lines, but by views of the current government. However, those who support President Kagame's current government tend to be mostly Tutsi, while those who oppose him tend to be mostly Hutu. There are many radical Hutu groups that either deny a genocide of Tutsis ever took place, or argue that there was such a genocide, but was followed by a genocide of Hutus by the Tutsis.

¶6. (SBU) The conflict has resulted in minor incidents between the two groups, but no major instances of violence have been reported. Most recently a group of Hutu genocide deniers tried to hold a counter demonstration during the April anniversary of the genocide. The City of Brussels and the Council of State prohibited the march on administrative grounds, but the groups are expected to correctly file needed paperwork. The government of Rwanda is pressuring the Belgian authorities to deny the group's request.

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